October
1906

The Black Cat

The Picture Post Card N. E. S. Ely

The Sapphire Chain $100 Prize
Caroline Ticknor

The Kiteologist Don Mark Lemon

Preacher Lamoine Edna A. Foster

When Cupid Was on Time Lucius L. Wittich

Bachelor John Edgar Welton Cooley

Price 5 Cents

Vol. XII., No. 1. Whole No. 133. Copyright, 1906, by
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BOSTON, MASS.
Strand, London, W. C.

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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Vol. XII., No. 1. Whole No., 133. OCTOBER, 1906. 5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

725
164
10

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The Picture Post Card.*

BY N. E. S. ELY.

"THERE was an odd card came through the office today. I don't usually take notice of that sort of thi g any more, but I was obliged to stop and look at this one."

On a certain evening in September the foregoin remark was made, not by one rural or suburban postmaster in a certain quarter of these United States, but probably by at least five hundred.

Some of these worthies had found themselves the recipients of this card that had so attracted their notice, and had pinned it up among recruiting posters and weather maps for all comers to admire. Most of them had simply turned it over while sorting out the mail addressed to some public character in the town, — shopkeeper, schoolmaster, priest, or librarian. Everywhere it was commented upon, from crossroad villages, where scarcely six letters arrive in a week, to the offices of great cities where clerks, working as fast as human power can drive, saw and remembered it in one hurried glimpse.

There was no need for anyone to look twice, for it fastened itself upon the brain at the first glance; yet all those who received it

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looked at it much oftener than twice, and usually placed it somewhere in sight afterward. It was lodged on parlor chimney pieces, in the rims of bedroom mirrors, in showcases, over office desks, on shop counters, on the locker door of the caboose, on the school mistress's table, — and everywhere it conjured up much gossip, much wonder, much vague emotion.

It is something, when one comes to think of it, for a small black and gray picture card to be the talk of a thousand towns and villages on one day, of another thousand the next day, and of still another thousand on the third. But there was no omniscient detective to catch the echoes of all these scattered conversations, to wonder who had originated the picture and for what object it was thrown broadcast over the country.

There was no writing or advertisement upon it, it appeared without explanation in all sorts of people's mail, and surprisingly varied were the scraps of talk it provoked. What three places, for example, would be less likely to be caught in the same web of discussion than these — a corner of the university library in Syracuse, a lonely turnpike outside the convent of the Annunciation in Ohio, and the comfortable family dining room of Judge Jeremy Choate in the city of Marton, Illinois?

True, they are all strung upon one great railroad system, though that is saying scarcely more than that they are all reached by the daily mails; and Albany, New York — the unvarying postmark — is also a station of this railroad. But even these slight facts were unnoticed since no one who received the card guessed how many fellow-citizens beside himself were wondering over it.

Indeed, if William Lancelot, professor of Comparative Romance in Syracuse University, had known that his was not the only post card of the sort in existence he might have been less perturbed.

"I want you to look at something that came in my mail this morning, Velini," he said to his friend, the instructor in Fine Arts, taking him into an alcove full of portfolios where they could be alone.

The professor was a Canadian, extravagant in dress, courtly in manner, conscious of being a figure in the small university world and inclined to bear himself patronizingly toward underlings.

But apparently at this moment he was speaking with unusual gravity; the younger man felt that he was not being asked for a mere artistic judgment as he took the picture post card in his hand.

"Very remarkable face, Doctor Lancelot. Is it a copy of some painting? I don't know it."

"I don't know it either. I don't know anything about it; the handwriting of the address on the back is perfectly strange to me and certainly not that of one of my few correspondents in Albany where, you see, it was mailed. I should like to know just what you make of it, Velini."

The instructor in Fine Arts looked carefully at the post card; it seemed of the ordinary sort usually sent as souvenirs, on one side a one cent stamp and the address neatly written in purple ink, on the other the picture. And this picture was merely of a woman's head and shoulders.

The background was dusky gray, shaded to black in the four corners, and in one of these corners a very dim second figure — that of a man on his knees — could be made out, with no particular relation, apparently, to the central head.

"In the first place, this isn't an ordinary printed postcard; it's a photograph, a platinotype of some sort I should say, and made by an amateur, though it's good work."

"Exactly, that is what worries me. Go on."

The instructor took his large magnifying glass from his pocket and studied the picture again.

"It's the photograph not of an actual person, but of a painting — you can see the brush strokes — but as to this smaller figure down in the corner — "

"Go on," said Lancelot again.

"That little figure of the man kneeling is out of proportion, and moreover it's evidently the photograph of some real man. The picture, you see, is a composite print, done from two negatives — one of a person, the other of a portrait — which, by the way, must be a wonderfully fine piece of work. I should like to get hold of whoever painted it."

"What do you think the thing means?"

"Aside from the cost of getting it up, I should say some adver-

tisement. It's just the sort of semi-allegorical picture to catch the public eye — abstract woman with eyes that follow you round the room, concrete man supplicating from the shadows. The head is not like anyone you know, is it?"

"It's very like," returned Lancelot. "Not quite, but yet very like — "

The instructor listened curiously, for the sufficient reason that Lancelot was the notorious bachelor of the university.

"— I must tell you because I want counsel, but at the same time I must ask for complete secrecy, Velini. This picture is very like the lady in Baltimore to whom I became engaged last summer. We have been obliged to keep the fact hidden because of certain family troubles; her parents both died suddenly and the two younger sisters of whom she was left in charge have given her much uneasiness, one by making an unhappy marriage, the other by — steps equally unfortunate. So you see that the more I wonder about the source of this unusual looking card, the more I become bewildered and suspect hidden insolence."

"May not the likeness be merely accidental?" asked the instructor, soothingly.

"Impossible. It's not Laura, I think, yet it's so very like her." Professor Lancelot muttered the last words half aloud as he put the card in his pocket.

"Laura who?" wondered the instructor to himself, vainly.

Half a thousand miles away Father James Bauer, parish priest, turned to Father Alonzo, chaplain of the Annunciation, who had overtaken him in the convent buggy.

"I'm glad to have this opportunity of speaking when there's no one near. I was coming up to consult you; a young head that hasn't had all the romance knocked out of it can sometimes find the right explanation for a thing. What do you think of this post card that came in my mail this morning?"

The younger priest looked at the woman's face upon the card, turned it over and inspected the neat purple writing of the address, turned it back and looked again, long and searchingly.

"You see why I brought it to you; of course it's nothing for me to receive picture post cards; old parishioners often send them, especially in summer when travelling. But you see — ?"

"Sister Laura Gabrielle," returned the chaplain briefly.

"Exactly. I wanted to be sure the resemblance wasn't in my own fancy. I can't think of any explanation that wouldn't sound absurd — and yet, it seemed my duty to show it to you. It is her picture, is it? — taken of course before her profession?"

"That's the point," returned Father Alonzo. "Line for line and feature for feature this is a remarkable likeness of the Sister — yet it can't be, for this picture shows a gentleness, an anxiety, a look of submission, which her face certainly hadn't before she came to us — and naturally, as you suggest, it can't have been taken or painted since."

"Possibly some one of her family closely resembling her may have become an actress or singer, and so have made her face public property?"

"Hardly. Sister Laura Gabrielle was a Miss Delmar — people of an old southern type that is not common, something prouder than the Cæsar's, father."

"Her name was not originally Laura?"

"No — she was Margaret Gabrielle, in itself more regular and usual. I advised her retaining it, but she would have Laura, evidently for some strong family reason.

The two priests ruminated for a while, and the fat convent horse jogged at his own gait through the dust.

"The odd fact remains," observed Father Bauer, "that to me, in this out of the way corner, should be sent, without explanation, a most striking and evidently significant picture card, with valentine trimmings — you observe the figure of the man kneeling in the corner? — and that we both should notice a strong likeness to the striking features of a certain Sister under your charge. — Why?"

"I can see no possible connecting link — and Sister Laura Gabrielle is wonderfully firm. Yet I shall watch closely — "

However, it is to be presumed that the former Miss Delmar was reconciled to being watched before she made her profession, and was consequently as unaffected by the conversation of her confessor as she was by the talk over Judge Choate's dinner table, four hundred miles away in Illinois.

Here were seated Mrs. Choate, hearty and conscious of a social

position that obliged her to have the best of curtains and cookery; the judge, hearty and conscious of his influential finger in state politics; the youngest Choate in a high chair, and others ranging indefinitely upward. It was the eldest son, just made pastor of the First Church of Marton, who brought the post card home.

"Look what came in my mail — rather unusual, isn't it?"

"Mr. Sykes over in the City Hall has one," announced the second son. "He's regularly cracked about it — going to have it framed, and crazy to find out who sent it to him."

"It's printed right from a negative, I know how to do them, but I don't know that good looking girl," said the school boy."

"One of your actress friends, my son?" inquired the judge, with a mischievous glance at the young minister, who flushed indignantly.

"I think it's a horrid face," said the eldest daughter, "beautiful, maybe, but with a terrible temper behind it. And it's like some one we know, but I can't think who."

The youngest girl passed it over the baby's head to her mother

"Why, bless my soul," said Mrs. Choate.

"Oh, the actress is a friend of Mother's," said the judge.

"It looked familiar to me," acknowledged the minister, "Though I assure you, I don't know any such lady."

"Actress, indeed!" Mrs. Choate held the picture up to general view. "Why, don't you see it's our Laura?"

Scarcely had this astonishing announcement fallen on the circle when the swinging door from the pantry opened and, bearing a mountainous shortcake, there entered "our Laura" — the Choates' Laura, three months' envy of all the ladies in the Marton Woman's Circle, treasure among skilled servant maids.

"Come and see your picture, Laura," said the judge, interpreting the general shout. The young woman, serious, as always, and silent, as always, obediently took the card from her mistress' hand — and a moment afterward there was consternation in the Choate family, for "our Laura" had fainted dead away.

Though its arrival brought consequences so puzzling, however, nobody thought to trace the post card to its starting point in Albany, however eagerly he might admire the picture on its back, search the shops for others like it, and set the "art" dealers hunt-

ing for larger copies of the original. Certainly neither Professor Lancelot, nor Father Alonzo, nor Judge Choate had concern enough to take train for that city and wait sleuth-like in the post office in hope of getting sight of the unknown sender.

Indeed, if one of them had, he might have been surprised to find the sender a stately servant, black, and wearing with great dignity his set of gold buttons.

But a self-constituted detective would have had to act promptly or he must have been too late. The daily journeys of this servant, bearing his great bundle of cards with their neat purple addresses, ceased as abruptly as they had begun, and over the old house in Godolph Street — whence he evidently set out — there came a sudden and startling change.

This house had stood blind and gloomy all the summer, and, though signs showed that there must be folk within, the master might have been a mole with no thought but to work in the dark by himself, excluding visitors and never allowing a curtain to be raised in the neglected front windows.

But on this night of the fifteenth of September lights glowed from open door and sashes, little bay trees sprouted miraculously on the stone steps, and the odor of flowers drifted out as if there were a great party within, though indeed there were only two places laid in the dining room, and two people to eat the feast.

Passersby supposed that young Mr. Gudrum, the artist, had come back from travelling; neighbors knew that he had never been away and wondered what event had broken upon his sullen seclusion; near acquaintances, tradespeople, and friends of his servants smiled and nodded at the sight, for they were aware of the great thing that had happened — the mistress of the house had come home.

The two in the dining room had got past the first confused, passionate hour of meeting, which must not be chronicled, and had reached the stage of explanations.

"Now that we're never to quarrel again, never so long as we live, tell me where you were, all that weary time — "

"No, tell me what you did here, first. Mine will keep."

"I did what all hurt animals do — I sulked by myself in my hole," said the young husband. "I had sworn not to write to you,

or look for you — you were cruel to take advantage of those hot words — so what could I do?"

"But how did you pass the days?"

"Come round here and I'll show you."

The lady came to his side obediently; young Mr. Gudrum's chair was opposite the hearth, he pointed to a new framed picture hanging over the chimney-piece. It represented a woman's head and shoulders against a dusky background — the same head that had been scattered far and wide over the country by the post.

"What else was left me? I painted your picture, and poor enough it seems now that I've you to compare it with — but I put my whole heart into it, and after it was done I sat here and talked to it, night after night, to keep myself from going crazy."

"Poor boy," murmured the lady, "It is a strange picture of me — and much more interesting than I really am."

"And then, one day, I passed a shop window full of those miserable picture cards people send each other, and it came to me that there was one chance of making a sign to you. I couldn't hunt for you, I couldn't write to you, but I might send out a picture to catch your eye, a message that nobody else would understand. The only fact I had to go on was that you were seen taking a P. & A. train west; I knew the little bit of money you had, too, and that limited my field. Then I bought trade lists of representative people who might notice a card and show it about, and I rigged up a dark room and went to work. And to make things quite plain I put the little dim figure in the corner, knowing you would recognize the foolish snapshot of me you took once yourself in that dramatic attitude. So one of them did meet your eye?"

"Yes, and when I saw it I fainted away. And then I packed my things and came home."

"How did you happen to see it? Where were you, dear?"

"I was in Illinois, being a cook, a model servant. Don't look horrified, dear. They were such good, funny people; and I meant to write a book about my domestic experiences and get rich and then found a training school for cooks. I *am* a good one you know. It was a clever idea of yours, I was quite likely to see it. Ten of those post cards came to Marton, they said, and everybody talked about them. I wonder —"

"Well?"

"I wonder whether Laura or Gabrielle happened to see one? The picture might almost be taken for either of them; you've exaggerated the family points."

"Laura will be glad to know that we are together again."

"Yes. When she stops worrying about us perhaps she'll marry that poor, patient professor of hers. Dear Laura — we have been a trial to her; I so frivolous and Gabrielle so religious. But we both love her. Do you know Gabrielle took her name? She is Sister Laura. And I called myself Laura when I was a cook."

The young husband drew his arm around her. "We must write down to Baltimore and to Gabrielle's convent and tell them everything's all right again."

"Yes — but, dear, there's one thing I don't quite like."

"What's that?"

"Having my picture, that you painted of me, scattered all over the country this way. It was a desperate remedy."

"You needn't worry. Have you brought back with you the one you saw?"

"Yes, Mrs. Choate let me take it. It's in my bag — just where I threw it in the hall."

Leaving her a moment, the artist returned with the little card, which he handed her, picture side up.

"Look."

"Why, it's turning light," exclaimed the lady. "It has faded, I can hardly make out the face!"

"And in another day or so it will be gone completely. They were calculated to last about a week — that is, all but one that I've kept for myself. That was an easy matter to manage if you understood photography. I didn't intend them to live after they had served their purpose. Did you think I wanted your face all over the country, either, dear?"

So it happened that the only surviving copy of the post card for a few days so famous is carried about in Mr. Gudrum's pocket sketch book.

The Sapphire Chain.*

BY CAROLINE TICKNOR.

RS. ROYAL CORDOVER'S jewels were on her nerves far oftener than on her dainty person. Her husband, who adored her, had also an extravagant fondness for precious stones, and upon every birthday, Christmas, or wedding anniversary, he freely indulged his taste for purchasing gems to adorn his pretty wife.

When she remonstrated, he always answered: "My dear, I do it instead of buying horses, automobiles or old editions! and then, precious stones are always as good as cash."

"Yet the responsibility wears on me, Royal. I'm never half so happy as when my jewelry is locked up in the safety vaults."

"Now, my dear, wear the jewelry and let alone responsibility," her husband invariably retorted. "Gems are almost alive, and it is cruel to shut them up in darkness; they need the light and the companionship of handsome women, like other people."

The chain of sapphires was the most costly of all Mrs. Cordover's ornaments — in fact ten times more costly than any other. M. Verier, the well known Paris jeweller, had for years worked untiringly to gather together the marvelous collection of perfect stones which formed this string of flashing blue.

"It is superb, but it is like a millstone round my neck," the owner often murmured, as she unwound the chain upon returning from some social function.

The sapphire chain had certainly achieved a reputation of its own, and famous gems, like famous people, are a responsibility to have about one. Its goings and comings were chronicled and noted in various daily papers; it figured conspicuously in

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graphic accounts of social festivities and no column containing memorable details of feminine magnificence was quite complete without it.

It was regarding the sapphire chain that Mr. and Mrs. Cordover had their first serious quarrel. She had said with decision, "if I go to Chicago without you, just to attend a ball given by your friends, I refuse to be burdened with valuable jewelry."

To which her husband had replied, "I can trust Sophie to look out for your jewels. If you go to that ball you certainly must do yourself and me credit. What, appear in that sapphire velvet dress without the chain to match! Nonsense!" And the discussion had waxed more and more earnest until it had at last ended in tears and anger.

It was seldom that any difference occurred in which Mrs. Cordover, fragile pink-and-white Dresden china that she was, failed to carry her point, yet upon this particular occasion the papers which chronicled the ball spoke of the "priceless sapphire chain" worn by the wife of the great financier.

Whatever disagreement had previously occurred in connection with the transportation of Mrs. Cordover's jewelry, that lady parted from her husband in New York in specially high spirits. "Don't worry about anything," he had said before he stepped off the train, and she had answered quite recklessly:

"I don't intend to. Sophie has the responsibility and I am going to enjoy myself."

Sophie had been a tried and trusted maid in the Cordover family for fifteen years and needed no admonishing in any line. She idolized her mistress and watched over all of her possessions with jealous care. The little Russia-leather bag containing that lady's jewels and toilet silver was to the maid a sacred trust—she guarded it as she did the family honor, or her own rosary, which had been blessed by Pope Leo XIII.

Upon the night of the ball Sophie arrayed her mistress in the blue velvet gown, clasped on her diamond ornaments and fastened the sapphire chain in place; then, having seen her safely to her carriage where she was joined by friends, the maid returned to their rooms in the big hotel. Sophie's room, which adjoined that of her mistress, was warmed by a small open fire, over which she

sat plying her knitting-needles. Gradually the small grate became more and more vague and misty, and then it melted altogether from the maid's weary vision. She dozed, but was aroused by a curious, disturbing noise, and listened — it seemed to her that someone was rattling the door knob in the next room. Could it be possible her mistress had returned already? The maid stepped hastily into the other room and turned on the electric light. Then she paused for a moment — somebody was fumbling with a key outside the door. That puzzled her, for Mrs. Cordover had taken no key with her, and the door was locked on the inner side.

Sophie unlocked the door. Outside, a slender woman dressed in black and with a rather childlike, appealing face, shaded by a large drooping hat, was feebly endeavoring to fit a key into the keyhole. She gave a smothered exclamation as the door opened and put her hand over her heart.

"You gave me such a start! I thought this was my room!"

"What is it?" Sophie said, eying the figure with suspicion.

"I think I am a little faint and dizzy. That must be why I came to the wrong door." The strength in her tone suddenly died out and she swayed to one side. "A chair," she gasped, "some water."

Sophie threw the door open and caught the swaying form, which staggered towards a lounge and lay there, pale and motionless. As the maid hurried to the electric bell a feeble voice remonstrated:

"No, no, I shall be better soon — then I can reach my room all right. I will rest here a moment, with your permission."

"I have no right to give permission." Sophie again approached the bell.

"Wait," the newcomer said, sitting up with an effort, "I am almost myself again. These slight attacks pass off as suddenly as they come over me. She rose to her feet, steadied herself, and moved slowly towards the door. As she did so she glanced at the long mirror above the dressing-table.

"I do look pale," she murmured. Then she uttered a slight exclamation. "How curious!" she said. "That is a picture of a friend of mine." She pointed to a little silver frame which

Mrs. Cordover always carried with her. "Royal Cordover; I did not dream that he was staying at this hotel."

"He is not here," Sophie replied, reassured. "Mrs. Cordover is alone. She's at a ball tonight. She came on purpose for it."

"Indeed! I'm so delighted to know that she is here. I shall look for her tomorrow. It will be like old times to have a talk with her." The stranger's glance swept the dressing-table, where stood the open leather bag displaying empty jewel cases.

Sophie eyed her distrustfully. "Mrs. Cordover leaves early. Shall I give her your name in case you miss her?"

"I shan't do that," the other answered lightly. "Tell her I've a surprise in store for her. When does she leave?"

"We take the ten o'clock express in the morning."

Sophie stared after her retreating figure. "I don't like her," she meditated. "She don't seem a real lady, but still she knows the family." "Knowing the family," was with Sophie sufficient to offset many deficiencies in manners, if not in morals.

The maid dozed for a second time and when she woke again, her mistress stood outside the door. She stepped in hurriedly. "I'm perfectly exhausted. It was a great big tiresome affair and I'm so nervous, Sophie!" She sank into a chair.

"Wait till I bring you some hot bouillon." While she was sipping it the maid described the visit of the lady.

"I can't think who it can be," Mrs. Cordover mused. "I shall know when I see her. Sophie, it may be just imagination," she went on, after a few moments, "but I had an impression that two unpleasant-looking men followed me through the hotel corridor when I was starting for the ball, and when I came away I seemed to recognize their faces again as I waited a moment for my carriage. If I had been alone I should have been alarmed, but my friends only laughed at me and said my sapphire chain had made me nervous; perhaps it was merely imagination."

"If you feel nervous I'll take the jewelry down to the office," Sophie suggested.

"No, it is not worth while, we leave so early in the morning. I'm not worried about the jewelry, but annoyed at the idea of being followed in this big city where I am a stranger."

At three minutes before the hour the following morning, Mrs.

Cordover, accompanied by Sophie, passed through the gate and hastened down the platform to board the ten o'clock express; they had been several times delayed on their way to the station.

"I'm glad our section is engaged, this train seems crowded now," Mrs. Cordover said as they paused to inquire of an obliging colored porter which was their car.

As they started to step aboard someone touched Sophie's arm. "Just a word with your mistress," a voice cried breathlessly. "It is the lady!" Sophie said quickly, and Mrs. Cordover paused on the step.

"I must have just a word," the newcomer went on with cordial emphasis, her hand extended.

The other responded mechanically, eying her blankly. "Who is this?" she asked herself. "I certainly do not recall her."

"It is so nice to see you again after so many years," the stranger went on volubly. "Don't you remember me?"

"I cannot say I do." Mrs. Cordover made a motion as if to step aboard. "Perhaps you're coming, too," she said.

"No, I am seeing off my sister. She's in the car behind. You will remember her, you really must step in and speak to her!"

Mrs. Cordover hesitated. She felt helpless before the other's decisiveness. "Sophie," she said, "take the things to our seats and I will join you in a moment."

"If the train starts you can walk through, as it is just the car behind your own," the stranger said as she led the way.

In the confusion which ensued Mrs. Cordover found herself well in the centre of the car. Then, as she paused, the other said: "Wait just an instant till I find my sister," and disappeared.

Sophie, in charge of bags, shawls and umbrellas, was quietly awaiting her mistress, when the strange lady addressed her.

"Quick, quick," the speaker gasped: "Your mistress, Mrs. Cordover, has fainted in the next car. Hurry! Where is your flask. I'll take charge of your things!" Sophie still held the Russia-leather bag. "Stupid, what are you waiting for? She may be dying for all I know!"

At such a terrible suggestion Sophie forgot all else; she dropped the hand-bag, flew to a travelling case from which she pulled a flask, and rushed in the direction of the car behind.

The train had been a moment late in starting. Now the bell struck, and as the cars moved slowly through the station a slim woman in black holding a Russia-leather bag, alighted on the platform. She was not, however, the last to leave the moving train — two men, who had been seated in the section adjoining Mrs. Cordover's, swung themselves off behind her.

And Sophie, vigilant guardian of the possessions of her mistress, what was her feeling when, having reached the door of the car behind, she saw no other than Mrs. Cordover herself approaching, in full possession of health and faculties. She turned and dashed back to the seats she had deserted, to find that the lady in black had disappeared and with her the bag of jewels. One thought alone inspired Sophie; to catch the woman and get back the bag. She rushed back through the car, pushed by her startled mistress, whom she met at the door, jumped off of the train, now moving rapidly, and true to her feminine inheritance, alighted backwards and was thrown violently upon the platform. A moment later, instead of following the stolen bag, she was supported, stunned and dazed, into the waiting-room. Here, after a few moments, she regained her consciousness and, hastening to the telegraph operator, wired the news to Mr. Cordover.

Not many minutes later a westward-bound express was speeding on its way. Among its passengers was a trim little woman dressed in black. Her eyes, as she half closed them, glittered triumphantly and her childlike and bland expression gave way to one cunning and shrewd. She leaned back in her seat and watched the landscape. "Jim Watson couldn't have put that scheme through any better himself," she meditated. "I guess his wife's as smart as he is, at several little tricks. To think I should have been right on the spot to catch the famous Cordover sapphires. It's a good while since I have tried my hand at any little game, but seems to me I'm not so rusty."

The car in which she rode contained only a sprinkling of passengers, and she had chosen a seat far in the rear. There were vacant seats all about her, but the one in front of her was occupied by two unprepossessing looking men, who kept staring back at her insolently. As they continued to annoy her she finally got up, determined to take a seat across the aisle. As she rose, the

two men did the same and almost before she realized what had happened, they had turned over the seat in front of her and had planted themselves, one opposite and one beside her.

"What does this mean?" she cried indignantly. "I shall call the conductor." She jumped up quickly, but a strong arm jerked her into her place. Just then she caught the eye of the conductor, who was approaching. She beckoned to him frantically, struggling meantime to extricate her arm from a tight grip which was upon it. "Help, help," she cried indignantly, "these men have brutally insulted me and—"

"Be quiet," one of the men said threateningly, while his companion turned to the astonished railroad official. "This woman is crazy," he said deliberately. "We are in charge of her. Don't notice anything she says. We should have had her in a private section, but she seemed quiet when we came aboard; she has excited times, when it is hard to manage her."

"They want to rob me,—it is a lie!" the woman cried, but the conductor only looked anxiously in the direction of the other passengers. Then he remarked, "If she is troublesome you had better remove her to a private section. There are several empty ones in the next car."

"No, no," she gasped, "I will be quiet, I promise you," she sank back doggedly into her seat, the Russia-leather bag still clutched firmly in both her hands.

"I'll hold your bag for you," one of the men said, reaching out.

"You mean to rob me of it?"

One of the men regarded her with an insulting leer. "I think that bag has changed hands once today already." The woman shrank back perceptibly. "We watched your little game aboard the ten o'clock express. It is a game that two can play at."

The woman bit her lip and eyed them sullenly. "How long do you think you can keep up your game about my being crazy?"

"As long as you kick up a row. We saw you steal the bag and we have taken you in charge. You're in the hands of justice." The speaker winked at his companion.

"And you were after the bag yourself; you are not detectives!"

They measured each other in silence for a while. One of the men spoke finally: "You've done a pretty piece of business for

us and we will treat you square. You're in our power, but you keep quiet and hold your tongue and you will not be bothered; yet mind you, if you start to make a fuss, we'll have that private section quick as a wink."

The woman closed her teeth and glowered at them sullenly. One of the men deprived her of the bag, and she made not the slightest effort to retain it. Her game was up and she turned coldly to the window and gazed out at the scenery. And when, after many hours, the train was nearing Minneapolis and her two companions took leave of her, she neither turned her head nor glanced in their direction.

The woman's pent-up indignation, however, found a vent when, late that evening, she was being rapidly driven in the direction of a modest dwelling in an outlying district of the city. Her husband, who was accompanying her, listened indulgently to her tirade. Jim Watson had the keenest respect for his wife's capabilities, her shrewdness and her acquisitive proclivities filled him with constant admiration, and when she stormed he never interfered until a calm ensued. While she went on with ever-increasing vehemence he only whistled faintly, but at the tale's conclusion he broke forth with a genuine enthusiasm.

"You don't say, Rosey, you put that deal through all alone, and nabbed the stuff yourself!"

"Indeed I did, and I'd have had it here this minute if I hadn't been robbed by that low trick, and fooled by idiots who hadn't sand enough to work the thing themselves," she cried frantically.

"Never mind, Rosey. Don't tell the hackman. I'm interested in the chase myself — perhaps it's not up yet."

"Not up," she replied wonderingly. "What do you mean?"

"Wait till we get home, Rosey."

After an ample supper and a few cigarettes that lady's ruffled spirits were soothed somewhat and she discoursed with a degree of moderation regarding her Chicago outing. When at last, to the husband's discriminating eye, she seemed properly mollified, he rose and beckoned to her.

"Rosey, come here, I want you to tell me what you think of a couple of men who are waiting to see me." He touched a spring which opened a trap-door revealing a kind of ventilator under-

neath. Through this, one could gaze down into the room below.

The woman dropped upon her knees and uttered an exclamation. "Jim," she cried under her breath, "you sent those brutes out. I'd like to kill them." Below, on either side of a small table, on which rested a whiskey bottle and a couple of glasses, sat her travelling companions.

Jim Watson laughed and patted his wife's arm reassuringly. "Never mind, Rosey, the lion's share belongs to you. Let's go down and have a peep at the Cordover jewelry." She drew back angrily; "No," she said, "go near those brutes! Never!" Then curiosity prevailed. "Jim," she said pettishly, "I've often told you I ought to know your men by sight. You see what comes of your fool cautiousness. I think I *will* look at the jewelry."

. . . . . .

The express from Chicago was half an hour overdue. Royal Cordover, pale and tense, was pacing back and forth outside the gates in the big, chilly station. One needed but to glance at him to see that he was laboring under some heavy nervous strain. For the twentieth time he scrutinized the bulletin board and read the words "Chicago express 30 minutes late." The minutes since he came had seemed like hours, and they dragged by intolerably. He had experienced a series of dreadful days since the departure of his wife. There had been a panic in the stock-market and for a while he had despaired of stemming the rushing tide which had risen against him; for two days he had feared to see himself completely ruined, but the crisis had now almost passed and he felt it was possible to extricate himself. He should, however, need to tax his resources to the uttermost. His mind reverted to the sapphires — as he had said, they were as good as cash at any time. Then came the crushing news by wire telling him of the theft.

Since the receipt of Sophie's telegram, twenty-four hours earlier, he had left not a stone unturned in the direction of their recovery. All the police had been advised and they had placed able detectives upon the track. Every moment that Cordover could spare from business had been devoted to wiring and telephoning; he had been harrassed by glaring headlines in the morning papers which had exploited the loss but had not soothed his feelings, while pictures of himself and family grinned at him from every sheet. And

now, in a most miserable mood, he was awaiting his wife's arrival.

At last the tardy train made its appearance. Royal Cordover headed the line of those waiting to meet the incoming passengers. He spied his wife among the first to emerge through the gates.

"Royal, how pale you look" she cried with keen anxiety.

"I have been worried about you and the jewelry."

"And Sophie?" his wife questioned, "have you heard from her? She jumped off of the moving train after the woman who stole my bag."

"She is all right; she wired me about the loss and I've made every possible effort to trace the thief. The morning papers are full of the affair. I'm about sick with this on top of the panic in Wall Street. . . Here is John with the carriage," he added as they left the station.

As they rolled homewards Mrs. Cordover placed her hand gently on her husband's arm.

"Royal," she said. "You made me take the jewelry."

"I know it."

"You told me not to worry."

"I was a fool."

"I did not say so, Royal, and I have never been a woman who said 'I told you so.' Have I?"

"No, but say it now and get it off your mind."

"Well, Royal, if you'll acknowledge that my way generally is best, I'll tell you something."

"Go on, I'm listening."

"In spite of your commands, I had decided it wasn't wise to travel with my jewelry, and a brief consultation with the jeweler resulted in the clever substitution of paste for all my gems. Everything I had with me was imitation, and you will find my sapphires securely stored in the safety deposit vaults."

The Kiteologist.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

UST come up on the roof, sir, and I'll show you the cage and tell you all that I know about the professor, but before we go a step further let me warn you that I don't believe a word of what the newspapers printed about him. No, sir, I won't and I can't believe that such a true gentleman as the professor always showed himself to be could have deliberately set out to rob the government of over fifteen thousand dollars. It's preposterous to think of, but it's just like the newspapers to make the matter as sensational as possible.

Take care you don't tear your coat on that nail. I'll have my boy pull it out when he comes home from school. Now, sir, step this way, and you can see for yourself how innocent the professor was of any evil intentions. Look! Do you think this flat tin roof looks like a robber's roost? It's ridiculous; yet to read the newspapers you would think that we landladies are the friends of robbers, and all manner of thieves. We landladies have a hard enough struggle to live, without the newspapers making it any harder for us.

Yes, sir, this is the cage where the professor kept his three big eagles, and now I'll tell you how he came to stop with me, and why he had such strange-like pets. You see, I had just lately taken this house and had spent the last dollar I had in the world in furnishing it, and was glad enough to have such a nice gentleman as the professor come along the second day after I put up my sign and ask if I hadn't a furnished front room to let, with running water and a good deep closet where he could keep his clothes.

Well, sir, I snapped him up at once, as I could see he was a gentleman, and, besides, he looked neat and prosperous, and I felt I wouldn't have to worry about him not paying his rent on time.

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But before he took the room he asked if he couldn't go up on the roof and see if it would suit him for a certain purpose. I was somewhat surprised at him wanting to rent the roof, but thinking him a photographer, or something like that, I brought him up here and he was real pleased. So he told me his business, and I rented this roof to him without any hesitation at all. It isn't every day one can rent a scrap of roof for more than a good sunny front room, and you can't blame me for doing so.

Well, sir, he was a kiteologist, as he told me. He flew kites to study the winds and the temperature at a great height. He wasn't in the employ of the government, but was studying on his own account. He took his silk hat off and sat down right over there, and explained all about it to me. His kites weren't like those that the boys fly, nor were they like I have seen pictures of in the papers — great big box-like things — but they were eagles — real, live eagles. He had three of them, and he would attach a strong string to their legs and let them fly up into the heavens with a thermometer and barometer attached, or some such-like scientific instruments, and, when he was ready, he would gently draw them down again.

Well, sir, it was a pleasure to hear him talk; he knew everything about eagles and kites and the heavens, and of course I consented for him to bring his birds and fly them from my roof, not supposing the landlord I get the house from would care at all. Which I can say, he didn't. So the next day the professor came with his three eagles and placed them up here on the roof in that big cage, and it was good to see how he did love those birds, and play with them, and teach them all kinds of tricks. My gracious, but they were strong! I really think the smallest of the three could have lifted a big child in its claws; and the professor explained how that they must be strong to carry his scientific instruments so high in the air.

Well, a week passed and he didn't fly his eagles, for he was waiting for them to get accustomed to their new location, so they would return like carrier-doves in case the string tied to their legs got broken; and at the end of the week, before the professor could try his experiment at all, that dreadful accident happened, which the papers made so much of, and which frightened the pro-

fessor, who was timid, like all real scientific men, so that he never came back, even for his clothes.

You see, just across the street from here is the sub-treasury, and every little while a wagon drives up to the door filled with big canvas bags full of gold, and the clerks will come out and get the gold and carry it into the vaults. Well, on Tuesday morning, just after I had finished some washing and was going out to get a new handle to my irons, which had got broken, the wagon drove up before the sub-treasury door and the clerks began to take out the sacks of gold and carry them into the bank.

I can truly say that I'm not by nature a covetous woman, but, naturally, I paused and watched the men a moment or two, thinking what I could do if I had what was in just one of those sacks. Why, there must have been as much as four or five thousand dollars in each sack, and there were dozens of them, I believe.

Suddenly, as I was standing there, a darkness seemed to come over the sun, and at the same time a strange flying sound made me look up, and there were the professor's three eagles broken loose from the cage — I felt real sorry for the professor, to think that his birds had got loose — and down they came and lighted on the wagon full of gold. I lifted up my apron to shoo them back to the roof, when if those three mischievous birds didn't settle right down into the bags full of gold, and each one grab a bag in his claws, like I saw them grab a bag with a dead rabbit in it on the roof one day, and no sooner had they grabbed the bags of gold than up they flew again to the roof.

I was astonished beyond measure, but the clerks who were carrying in the gold were simply dumfounded. And no wonder! Supposing the eagles should spill the gold or fly away with it, why the poor clerks might have to return it out of their salaries, and I hear they don't get paid so much, though they are employed by the government.

Well, sir, the moment I could collect my scattered senses, I rushed back into the house to tell the professor what had happened, for, as I hadn't seen him on the roof, I supposed he was in his room. Of course the clerks followed me, and we all hurried up here where you are standing now. The three eagles were gone, and the professor was nowhere to be found. Poor man, he was out

somewhere in the city, and I felt like running down and warning him not to return, for fear they would hold him responsible for the gold.

I saw that the eagles each had lately had a long cord tied to its legs and I thought nothing of it more than proper, but the clerks acted like a lot of wild-men. They vowed that the eagles had been let down to steal the gold, and when they saw that this roof leads over to the next building yonder, they said that the owner of the birds had taken the gold and climbed through an open window in that building into an empty room, and that way escaped with the fifteen thousand dollars.

Of course I saw at once how dreadfully dishonest it all might be made to look, and I sat down and almost cried. At first the clerks and the officers paid no more attention to me than if I had been a sick kitten, but when they learned that I was the landlady and knew all about the eagles and the professor, they asked me a thousand questions, and I was dragged off to court like a criminal, and the poor professor's name was mixed up with robbery and thieving, and I don't know what else. But, somehow, he learned about the mischief his eagles had got into, and never returned.

Of course the eagles flew away with the gold bags — poor birds, I don't blame them a bit for making the most of their liberty — and I wouldn't at all be surprised if the police should find that the birds had dropped the gold on some roof, when they discovered that the bags didn't contain rabbit, as they had imagined.

Preacher Lamoine.*

BY EDNA A. FOSTER.

"PREACHER" LAMOINE was standing in the shadow of a cliff, stealthily scanning the scene before him. He was so motionless that he seemed almost a part of the landscape; his brown corduroy hunting suit was in no contrast to the rugged rock, nor, indeed, was his face — olive-tinted, with an undertone of red that one sees in a ripe russet. At his feet a little tributary of the Narraguagus crept out from between the hills and spread itself leisurely over broad ledges as though it would without haste choose its pathway to the sea. In the distance the broad Epping plains were covered with a hundred small white tents, the temporary homes of the blueberry pickers who were moving in and out among the low bushes. A mile further on the white houses of the village rose from a carpet of green and the smoke from a dozen chimneys floated lazily in the summer haze.

Not one of these objects held the eye of the solitary watcher. He was looking for something in the shady paths below. Presently he bent his ear to the ground, and what he heard made his eyes dilate and darken. When he rose, two figures had emerged from the deeper shadows of the wood. The girl's light laughter came up to him above the sound of the falling water and the man's tones were persuasive, persistent.

The girl held by each end the loosened red sash she wore and was drawing it more tightly about her waist, accentuating the lines of her girlish figure; her thin muslin dress was simply made, and its open throat revealed the graceful turn of her head. As the man threw one arm over her shoulder with an air of proprietorship her black, unbound hair fell over his sleeve.

Lamoine's hand went instantly to his hip pocket — this was the

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impulse of blood, for he was half Indian — but reason was better schooled, and this was not the time to right a wrong.

He had no wish to remain a spy, and, with bitter suspicions of the last few months fully confirmed, he turned away and waited until he heard the underbrush crack and knew that the girl's companion had taken the path over the hill. He swung himself over the cliff, landing with as little noise as a cat, and followed the girl. He found her by the river's bank, casting broken twigs into the foam below.

"Kitty," he said in a quiet voice.

She did not turn her head, but her pretty lips were compressed and her eyebrows straightened.

"I knew you were spying," she said.

There is a certain pith in the Indian language, — beautiful in its simplicity and brevity. Lamoine was a child of nature and he spoke with her similes.

"If you call it spying to watch and wish to save a sparrow blown against a cliff, beating out its life, helplessly, or to watch and be unable to restrain a doe that is running to a sure snare, then I have been spying."

"Who made you my keeper?" asked the girl, raising her head defiantly.

"God, I think, by the right of my love for you."

"Don't — don't!" she cried, spreading her little hands between them, — "don't say it." There was pain in her eyes that made her seem older even than yesterday.

"No, that is all you will ever hear about it," he said, quietly. "You have had enough of spoken love. I want to talk to you about this man — this Dechontelle. He has come here a perfect stranger — he left the West with scandal at his heels. There is a bad story of a woman in Omaha — "

"Stop, stop there! You have gone too far! Perhaps I know that story better than you do, — and — besides, — nothing you can say can in any way affect my feelings."

"Kitty, think of the pain this will bring to your father and mother. Your father distrusts this man and has forbidden your seeing him."

"Are you going to play the part of tattler as well as of spy?"

she asked insolently. "What if someone cared to rake up your own birth — and the reason for your dark skin — "

He raised his hand sharply. "Have a care! Well — let it pass, I have said all I shall."

The shadows had lengthened and a cold wind suddenly swept out from the river, and the girl shivered and turned away. At the bend of the path she looked back appealingly, for he had not moved.

"That was cruel," she said, "I don't know why I am so quick, of late, to take offence. I seem changed, even to myself. We have been playmates — I want you to forgive me."

"Before you asked it, you were forgiven. It is good for a man to hear the cold truth once in a while — and for me to realize that I am forever an alien."

"Not that — " she cried, coming back. But he had turned and was swinging up the hill, his great shoulders bent forward and his step light as an animal's. Scarcely a twig broke under his foot as he made his way up the mountain-side.

The sun was just setting behind Tunk hills when he reached his bungalow. A thin smoke was rising from the great stone chimney, and he hailed it with satisfaction. He was glad that his man was preparing supper, for he suddenly felt spent in spirit and in need of that atmosphere which we call home. He paused long enough, however, before going on to the door, to take a swim in the lake near by, and he came running up with some of his clothing over his arm. Andy, his man of all work, met him at the door, and helped him with his dressing. Lamoine permitted these ministrations like a man of the world, and quite unlike his bearing in other things. His life was one of great simplicity; he had inherited a fortune from an old captain, in whose family he had been educated, but when his college days were done he had made concessions to his Indian blood and answered to the call of the woods and had become a student of nature in the full sense of the word. He mingled in the social life of the village, but in a half-hearted fashion; he was not bitter, but he accepted the conditions of his birth.

"Preacher Lamoine," he was called in that village, where they could give a man no greater distinction than a friendly nickname. One morning when he first came back from school he had come

down the village just as a pauper child was being buried, and without "benefit of clergy." A rude cart had drawn the body to the hill and jolted away down the cart-track, leaving the mother alone with the sexton, who was impatient to throw the first spade of earth and go home to his fire. The mother was mourning that no prayer had been said. At just that moment Justine Lamoine came swinging along, with his gun over his shoulder, but a Bible in his pocket. He laid down his weapon and swung himself over the low fence that separated the land of the quick from the homes of the dead, and opening the little black book he carried he began to read in full, rich tones, "If ever the silver cord be loosed; or the golden bowl be broken." Then he closed his book and, standing with uncovered head in the teeth of a keen November gale, offered a prayer that was more comforting than the woman had ever heard. Turning abruptly, he took up his gun and went back to his home in the wood. After that he was "Preacher Lamoine."

While Andy was preparing his supper Lamoine opened his botany can that he had brought in earlier in the day, drew out the specimens of lichens, pressed them carefully, and wrote for some time in his notebook. Then he went to his bookcase and took out a leather bound copy of Epictetus and turned to his favorite passage. He stood as he read, and, watching him, one might wonder why he ever sat. He stood as easily as an oak tree in the forest and with as little apparent need of support. He read aloud, in quiet, even tones, that were as smooth as music. "Why, then, art thou ignorant of thy high ancestry? Wilt thou not remember in thy eating who it is that eats? And whom thou dost nourish? Unhappy man! Thou bearest about with thee a God, and knowest it not. But in the presence of God within thee, who seeth and heareth all things, that dost both desire and do, O thou unwitting of thine own nature, and subject to the wrath of God!"

He read on for some time that he might regain his usual untroubled brow, for he had returned with little of that righteous satisfaction which is supposed to follow the performance of a good deed, or the attempts of a reformer. He wanted to feel that his effort to avert the evil that hung over this girl's head sprung from unselfish motives, but his own longing would cry out, chastise himself though he did.

"Andy," he said, when the man had brought in his steaming supper and set it on the great wooden table in the centre of the room, "I want you to do a piece of work for me tonight while I — I shall be at the dance at Longley's. I want you to repair and adjust our heaviest bear trap and place it in the Putter trail. The point must be seventeen yards from the bix X cave and before the turn leading to the brook. It is the narrowest point — there is a drop of twenty feet on one side and a wall of stone on the other!"

"I know the exact place, sir."

"Can you have a man to help you who will keep his mouth shut, and can you do it before twelve o'clock?"

"I can."

"Very well. Remain by the trap until morning — I will go there myself, before then. But keep your presence unknown to whomever comes."

"Yes, sir."

Lamoine took up his Epictetus and stood it upright against a decanter and Andy withdrew, knowing the interview closed.

A cold and slender little moon was setting behind the tall pines as Justine Lamoine came up the walk leading to the road-house kept by Silas Longley. Silas stood in the door and hailed the young man jovially.

"Juniper Jingo! What are you bringing a gun to a dance for? This here ain't goin' to be a turkey raffle, nor yet a shootin' bee."

"You ought to know by this time that a gun is part of my costume," laughed Lamoine, good naturedly.

"Well, stand it up in that corner, and unload it, darn ye — we don't want a call from the sheriff tonight — he's no dancer."

"I seen a terble funny thing on the mountain," said a cracked voice behind them, and Lamoine turned to see the village charge, simple Hiram Budd, standing beside him. "I seen a kind of a schroochin' thing hoppin' along an' every time it jumped it haouled, — and every time it haouled, it jumped."

"Is that so, Hiram?" said Silas kindly, "well, there's a good many funny things on the mountain, — especially down near the still. You called there first, I take it."

"No, it was this morning, I could see it as plain as I see you, — a sort of fuzzy-lookin' thing, hoppin' around like all possessed

and every time it hopped up, it haouled out, and every time it let a haoul it jumped ag'in! Terble funny thing! I am goin' lookin' for it tomorrow."

"Well, take along your dictionary and perhaps you can find a name for it." The old man walked restlessly up and down the platform, as though something was on his lips to speak, and Lamoine, knowing full well what matter most engaged his thoughts, gave no opportunity for confidence.

"Nancy!" the man called sharply at last, "can't you come and fix this tarnation collar so's 'twill stay on?" and pulling vigorously at the collar he managed to tear it away from the binding.

Mrs. Longley, a sweet-faced, ample woman, came to the door. She brought in her hand a white silk handkerchief, which she proceeded to tie about the man's neck. "There," she said, "now keep that on or I'll have you put to bed."

"Here comes the fiddlers," said Silas, going down the steps to hail the musicians, on whose heels came the young people of the village.

Lamoine did not enter the house at once, but walked nervously up and down the platform. Through the lighted windows he could see the long tables at the back of the room on which were several huge bouquets and a solid row of heavy mugs, in which coffee was to be served later in the evening. Kitty was coming and going through the rooms; she passed so near him that he could have spoken, but he kept in the shadow and watched her face. She seemed preoccupied and yet alert. Presently she came to the door, and, seeing him, she came forward with extended hand. For a moment her fingers lay on his great palm; no word was spoken. His eyes, however, in that brief moment, pledged eternal love and protection. The spirit of his greeting seemed to fill her with a sudden pang of pity and regret.

"We are friends, aren't we?" she said, as humbly as a child.

"Forever, — whatever comes," he said quietly.

When she had gone he felt less inclined toward the merry-making than before, and more sure that the night would bring some sort of revelation. He was under the spell of expectancy that he could not define.

The fiddles rasped boisterously and the floor shook as the

dancers whirled past him. Dechontelle was the last to arrive, and as he came across the garden and sprang up over the platform he was upon Lamoine before he knew it. Both men stared sullenly. Lamoine wondered at the man's audacity in coming to a house where he knew he was unwelcome. Dechontelle's eye travelled rapidly until he found Kitty. She was floating down the room on the arm of a lusty blacksmith. "Damn these dances!" said the man under his breath, and swung into the room. It was not long before he had changed places with the young blacksmith and was holding Kitty in the slow waltz with the easy grace of those who have been trained in other places than the Narraguagus valley.

Unable to look on the scene calmly, Lamoine turned his gaze to the distant mountain, and as he did so a strange glow met his eyes. "Ah!" he exclaimed under his breath, — "if it is tonight, nature has conspired to aid them." He found Silas at once and gave the alarm. At the very moment the little cracked bell on the town hall gave forth the alarm. The dancers came to the doors, the women in resentful disappointment, but the men with hearty bravery, and as ready for one excitement as for the other. They armed themselves with spades, hoes and old bagging, and the women followed on behind, some with a woman's weapon, the broom, and all a little fearful of the outcome.

Dechontelle spoke a hurried word to Kitty and then followed the others, but, Lamoine noticed, with no preparation for work. He soon made a détour, and Lamoine noticed with satisfaction that it was toward Putter's trail. He brought his teeth together with an exclamation that with most men would have been an oath.

For some hours Lamoine worked with the other men, guiding and directing, for he knew the woods as no other man, and the natural course of the wind and flame. He liked the action after so much stirring of his emotions; he liked the feeling of driving the men in concert, and the war with such an element. When the danger abated and a trench had been dug, and it was plain that the course of the blaze had been diverted, he gradually detached himself from the men and made his way across the hills, ostensibly to his home. It was nearly morning, and far away over the plains there was the first warm reddening of the sky that foretold the miracle of day.

He stood for a long time looking in that direction and then he

cast his eyes upward and looked deeply into the heavens. A mighty love sometimes makes one prophetic. "Before the sky has turned to blue," he said, "she will have passed out of my life forever." Then he buckled his belt more closely about his waist, felt the cold steel of his revolver in his pocket, and turned his steps toward Putter's trail.

He walked some distance, feeling his way as carefully as a four-footed thing, before he paused to listen. When he bent his ear to the earth it told him what he had anticipated was true. He struck a match and looked at his watch. "The early train will pass in two hours, — they ought to go on, almost immediately." As though he possessed the gift of second sight he planned his course, and when he drew near the ledge beyond the X cave he was as calm as though the scene were of ordinary occurrence.

He carried a small bullseye lantern, which he lighted and concealed in his coat, and when he turned it upon the trap it struck the eye of Dechontelle first. It was Kitty who screamed, but her companion did not move nor speak. Both were held as firmly as in a vise.

"Dear, good Justine," cried the girl, "take your revenge at once, —kill me, for I am the whole cause of this! Don't — don't kill him!"

For answer Lamoine drew a small prayer-book from his pocket. Drawing out his pistol he cocked it sharply.

"I am, as you know, a justice of the peace. Are you ready to enter into the marriage contract?"

Kitty hung her head and groaned.

"Damn you!" said Dechontelle.

"You have done that already, with this night's work. Are you ready?"

"No, I am not, I choose to have you let me out of this trap where I can answer you face to face."

"I think you are perhaps as ready as you will be, and, if you will allow me, I will go on with the service."

Placing the cold barrel of the pistol to the man's head he read the marriage service, slowly and distinctly. The great shadows seemed to settle about them and a solemn stillness reigned in the wood. Kitty had hung her head, and dry sobs shook her figure.

"I pronounce you man and wife. And what God has joined together let not man put asunder." Then he turned to the shadows. "Andy," he said softly.

"Yes, sir."

"You are a witness to this marriage?"

"Yes, sir."

"Help me open the trap."

In silence the clumsy mechanism was raised, and Dechontelle stepped out. Kitty fell forward. Lamoine caught her, or she would have fallen.

"Fear not," said Lamoine softly. "You are safely wed, and with witnesses. I will tell them at home — in the best way I can."

The pair passed away into the shadow of the wood and Andy pitched the trap into the ravine. "Shall I wait, sir?" he asked.

"No, I shall simply make sure that they take the train," said Lamoine. "You may prepare breakfast."

Two hours later the train whistled sharply on the other side of the mountain. Lamoine heard it draw up at the station and knew that it had been flagged. He gave a sigh of relief and turned up the hill to his house, and when Andy saw him coming it seemed to him that the man had suddenly aged.

Again he took up his volume of Epictetus and stood before the open fire, reading. Andy heard the words that he repeated again and again:

"Remember that thou art an actor in a play, of such a part as it may please the director to assign thee. And if he will have thee take the part of a poor man, or a cripple, or a governor, mayst thou act that part with grace. For thine it is to act well the part — but to choose it is another's."

When Cupid Was On Time.*

BY LUCIUS L. WITTICH.

ISS BALLARD finally opened the letter, having wisely concluded that the identity of the author could be established to a greater degree of certainty in that manner than by merely scanning the exterior of the epistle. As she tore the missive open a bit of crisp, pale blue paper fell from within and, fluttering fitfully downward, alighted in the grass at her feet.

"A check, a wedding remembrance," she almost gasped, seizing the precious particle of tinted writing material and turning it several times in her nervous fingers before realizing its full significance. Then she made out the following words, inscribed in a big, mannish hand, on the face of the check:

Pay to the order of Mrs. Albert Garvin Mefford,
Five Thousand Dollars.

EZRA C. HOCHKINS.

In large, dark red letters across the top of the check Miss Ballard saw printed the name, "Springbrook National Bank," and she realized that the gift was not bogus. Her next move was to rush to the telephone and tell Mr. Mefford the joyous news.

"Oh, Albert dear," she panted into the transmitter: "Uncle Ezra, Ezra Hochkins, no, no, not hog pens, Ezra C. Hochkins, you know — Uncle Ezra, of West Springbrook. Well, the dear old darling, what? yes, that's what I said, the dear old darling. Well, he has just sent me a check for five thousand dollars. Just think of it, dear, hello, hello, central we are still talking. Please do not interrupt us, hello, hello, is that you, sweetheart? who? the police station? oh, heavens, I have the wrong number." Failing to reestablish a connection with the Springbrook Evening Sun, over

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which publication Mefford presided as city editor, Miss Ballard returned to the perusal of the letter which had arrived in the envelope with the check.

WEST SPRINGBROOK, KAN., July 1.

Dear Marjorie:

I understand that you are planning to celebrate the glorious Fourth in a rather unusual manner. I am glad to hear this, for I am a strong advocate of early marriages. You will find a check for five thousand dollars enclosed, which I sincerely hope you will accept. There is one condition, however, which I must insist upon, Marjorie, and that is this — the check must be endorsed before you reach the age of eighteen. You were ushered into this world at noon on July fourth, almost eighteen years ago, so in order to comply with my one condition you will necessarily have to enter the holy bonds of matrimony before the hour of twelve o'clock, noon, next Friday. You cannot, of course, endorse the check before you have actually become Mrs. Mefford.

About a year ago I made a small wager with your uncle, Dudley Maybrit, to the effect that you would become a matron before you reached your majority. Ten thousand dollars was the amount of the stake and your Uncle Dudley took the negative end of the proposition. So, as you are to be wedded on the fourth, I feel confident that my little offer will induce you to select the forenoon for the ceremony. I would be happy if you would select my home as the place of marriage. Wishing you and your prospective husband a long and prosperous married life, I remain,

Your affectionate uncle,

EZRA C. HOCHKINS.

"Oh, the horrid creature," wailed Miss Ballard. "I won't touch a cent of his old money, and yet, and yet" (she glanced longingly at the blue bank-check), "and yet," she concluded, "why shouldn't I? It's a case of bribery, pure and simple, and Uncle Dudley is so upright and honest in all his dealings that it would be real sneaking to cause him to lose his wager and, oh, dear, I'll tell Albert all about it and he will know how to advise me."

So she vainly endeavored to dismiss the subject from her mind until she could take her fiancé into her confidence.

Evening came, and so did Mefford. To the latter Miss Ballard disclosed the secret which, in some unaccountable manner, she had kept from her mother and sisters. And it took Mefford just three seconds to settle the question decisively.

"Of course we shall accept the dear old gentleman's offer," he said, and then they drifted off into the land of air castles.

Next morning Miss Ballard found herself again puzzled over the script on the smooth side of an envelope and, pursuing her tactics of the preceding forenoon, she opened the missive. As she did so a bit of crisp, pale blue paper fell from within and, fluttering fitfully downward, alighted in the grass at her feet.

"A check, another wedding remembrance," she almost gasped, seizing the precious article of tinted writing material and turning it several times in her nervous fingers before realizing its full significance. Then she made out the following words inscribed in a bold hand on the face of the check:

Pay to the order of Miss Marjorie Winifred Ballard,
Five Thousand Dollars.

DUDLEY ARTHUR MAYBRIT.

In large dark red letters across the top of the check Miss Ballard saw printed the name, "Springbrook National Bank," and she realized that the gift was not bogus. Her next move was to rush to the telephone and tell Mr. Mêfford the joyous news.

Thus the early morning happenings of two eventful days were identical. After 'phoning, Miss Ballard returned to the perusal of the letter which had arrived in the envelope with the check.

"Springbrook, Kan., July 2, Dear Marjorie:" the missive began, and in many respects it was a similar production to the one of the morning before. In one detail, however, it differed materially and Miss Ballard soon reached the detail in question.

"There is one thing, though," she read, "that I must insist upon, Marjorie. The check must not be endorsed until after twelve o'clock, noon, of July fourth." Following this was an account of the wager made twelve months before and also a request that if the prospective bride cared to accept the offer she should appear at his home, unmarried, at the hour specified.

"Oh, the horrid creature," murmured Miss Ballard. "This is not a real, sure enough wedding present, either. It's only a horrid bribe like the other check was. And the worst of it is we cannot accept it if we accept Uncle Ezra's, and we cannot accept Uncle Ezra's if we accept Uncle Dudley's. Now, if it were only possible to accept both, oh, o-o-h, ten thousand dollars, o-o-oh. I must tell Albert," and thirty seconds later the telephone wires were again busy.

Mefford studied over the proposition a long while that evening.

"Well," he finally said, "it seems to be a case of five thousand for us any way we fix it. I reckon it doesn't make so very much difference whether we are married before sun-up or after dark. It's all the same to me, but the quicker the —"

Suddenly he paused.

"I have it," he finally ejaculated, springing to his feet and performing an impromptu jig on the plank walk.

"Have what?" exclaimed Miss Ballard, both wonderment and alarm being depicted in her features.

"A scheme. A great scheme." Mefford paused an instant to regain his breath. "I have solved the problem," he continued. "Marjie, we shall accept both, ah, er, bribes as you term them. Now, don't ask questions, dear. It is growing late. Good night, dear and say, by the way, be ready to accompany me to your Uncle Dudley's home shortly before noon to-morrow. No, not another question to-night," and as he turned toward the gate a deep boom followed by a succession of minor noises broke the stillness of the night. Springbrook was beginning the holiday in a truly patriotic manner.

The guns and crackers were still thundering merrily when Miss Ballard arose late on the morning of July fourth. Arraying herself in wedding attire, and avoiding the volley of questions hurled at her by mother and sisters as best she might, she awaited the arrival of Mefford, who soon appeared in a surrey, with the Rev. Mr. Stone.

"Good morning, Marjie. Tell your mother and sisters to drive out to Mr. Hochkins' place," called Mefford, pulling the horse to a standstill in front of the Ballard residence. "And tell them to be there early if they wish to witness the show."

Miss Ballard delivered the message and, seated by her fiancé, was soon whizzing away in the direction of Dudley Maybrit's residence. Arriving, they were welcomed most heartily by Mr. Maybrit.

"Aha," he chuckled, kissing his niece, "so you are still single, eh, little girl?"

"Yes, Uncle Dudley, we have decided to, to er, er," she glanced helplessly at Albert.

"She is quite right, Mr. Maybrit," explained Mefford, "we have decided to accept your offer. We shall remain single until after twelve o'clock."

"Good," ejaculated Maybrit, but it was not until after the hall clock had tolled the hour of twelve that he looked entirely satisfied. Then, glancing at his own timepiece to assure himself, no doubt, that it was actually noon, he heaved a great sigh of relief.

"The wager is won," he croaked. "The ten thousand is mine. What will old Ez say? Mad, oh, wow, but he'll be hoppin'. It'll be worth a twenty-mile walk to see the old codger take on, ha, ha, ha!" The laugh of victory was still ringing in the air when the wedding party left, shortly after. The check, by the way, had been properly endorsed by Miss Marjorie Winifred Ballard and Dudley Maybrit had witnessed the signature.

From Maybrit's the minister drove toward West Springbrook. Across the Kansas prairies, where the sun gleamed with an intensity that was far from pleasant, they sped. It was ten minutes past twelve when they crossed the B. U. & M. tracks, which marked the division between the two Springbrooks. As they sped by, Mefford delivered a ludicrous salute to the two threads of shimmering steel which stretched away to a mere exclamation point in the gray distance. He offered no explanation for his remarkable antic and Miss Ballard was too deeply engrossed in trying to solve the mysterious actions of her lover to ask further questions.

By Mefford's watch and by the watch of the Rev. Mr. Stone it was just twenty minutes past twelve o'clock when they drew rein before the home of West Springbrook's wealthiest citizen, Ezra C. Hochkins. Mr. Hochkins, Mrs. Ballard, and the two Misses Ballard were there beneath a big cottonwood tree to welcome the arrivals, and it was there in the shade of the tree that Rev. Mr. Stone performed the wedding ceremony a few minutes later.

Mr. Hochkins was in an ecstacy of delight.

"I knew I would win," he kept repeating. "I told old Dud that I would win. Poor old Dud, how I fooled him this time, haw, haw, haw. Won't he be mad though? Whoopee. Jest wait till the old feller hears the news and thar'll be somethin' doin'."

The old gentleman's hilarity was assuming alarming proportions

when Mefford suggested that his bride endorse the check before the time limit had expired.

"Why, sure," ejaculated the host. "I'd purty near forgot about the check. But I reckon youse hadn't. Marjie, come with me," and the two hastened into the house to procure pen and ink.

Mrs. Mefford was greatly puzzled but, by a herculean effort, she managed to restrain herself from asking questions until she and Mefford were seated alone in the surrey and spinning toward Springbrook.

"Why, darling," exclaimed the groom in answer to her query, "haven't you solved the mystery, as you call it? It's so simple, dear, that there is really no mystery about it. We simply changed time when we crossed the B. U. & M. tracks. It's just one hour earlier on this side than it is on the other. There, you can see the tracks now, off there in the distance. Strange that neither of your uncles recalled the fact that time is just an hour later in Springbrook than in West Springbrook. But it will be brought to their minds soon enough, now. Oh, wow, I'd almost be willing to give up one of those checks to see the old fellows when they get together to settle their wager. It's dollars to doughnuts that they won't see the funny side of the affair."

And they didn't.

Bachelor John.*

BY EDGAR WELTON COOLEY.

HIS face streaked with perspiration and grime, Bachelor John wearily climbed the hill to his shanty. Opening the door, he paused to take a letter out of the mail box. It was addressed in a strange hand, and printed on one corner of the envelope were the words, "Wilbur Haines, M. D., Cripple Creek."

Removing his greasy hat, Bachelor John sat on the doorstep and opened the letter. It was a brief note, brusquely informing him that his only brother, Abner, had died suddenly, as the result of an accident.

The intelligence caused Bachelor John's hand to tremble, and a small slip of paper dropped from the envelope. On this was a message written in pencil in Abner's hand, which ran:

> DEAR JOHN: You have been a good brother to me, and I want you to have Baby Grace. I have signed the papers and Lawyer Mackey, here, will give them to you. Good-bye, brother John.
>
> ABNER.

Bachelor John's eyes grew misty. It was the first time Abner had shown any affection for him. Abner had been the baby. He was ten years younger than John, and throughout the years of their boyhood John had been compelled to give up to him in everything. In after years, their parents dead, John had endeavored to be a father to Abner. He had provided for his every need, and when Abner won the heart of the girl John had loved in secret, he had closed his teeth upon his anguish, and had impoverished himself to help Abner get a start in life.

After Abner went to the gold fields, John had not heard from him often. He knew She had died, and that there had been a baby girl. But somehow, he could not remember how, he had

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got the impression that the child had died also. It would be about three — no, it must be fully four years old, now.

Bachelor John glanced around his two barren rooms. He had been unable to profit by opportunities. Until middle age, he had worked unceasingly and uncomplainingly for Abner and Her. This was his home — a dreary place for a baby girl. And how could he leave her alone while he was at work?

"It was Abner's wish," he said. "I will fix it somehow."

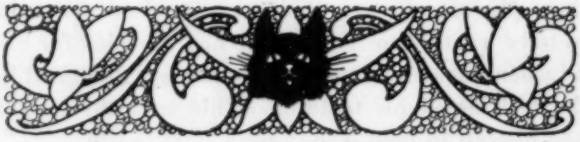
That night the clock struck twelve while Bachelor John was leaning over the table gazing at a faded photograph of a young woman.

"If the baby looks like her," he said, as he lay on the bed staring at the darkness, "I will love — love it!"

To the gold fields was a far journey for Bachelor John, but at last he stood in Lawyer Mackey's office.

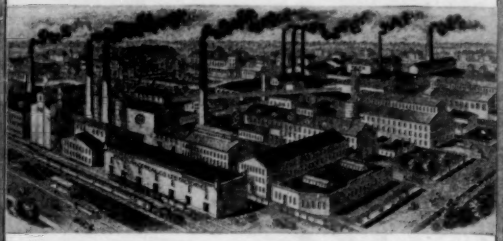
"Your brother," said the attorney, "left neither wife nor child. He was killed by the caving in of a tunnel in his mine, the 'Baby Grace.' This cave-in uncovered one of the richest veins in Cripple Creek, and this he has deeded to you. It will make you a millionaire."

Bachelor John made no reply. In silence he took the papers and passed slowly out into the Colorado sunshine, and upon his face was the shadow of a great disappointment.



THE DOOR

UNBOLTED



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